

EXHIBIT 1
DATE 01/25/07
#B 399



Montana Economic Developers Association

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January 23, 2007

TO: HOUSE STATE ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE
Rep. Dennis Himmelberger, Chair

RE: HB399 Health insurance option for local economic development organizations

The Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA) represents over 200 professionals who work for local economic development organizations across the State of Montana. We are professional "lead" economic developers, business specialists, government employees, and staff members of affiliated non-profit organizations which promote and foster economic development activities in Montana.

A priority for our organization is to establish access to insurance for our economic development professionals. In a state that is difficult to attract and keep professionals in our field, it is important that benefits are provided which keep us competitive. More so, because many of the private sector lead development organizations are training grounds for both large organizations and state positions, it is important to have a seamless, accessible and affordable health care system for these individuals.

We are not asking the state to contribute to this cost but rather allow access to a larger insurance system as an option. We can demonstrate that our members often times contribute more than what is paid out on their behalf thus strengthening the overall system.

Montana State law already allows our members to be part of local government insurance systems. Unfortunately, in many small communities where economic development professionals practice, insurance is either unavailable or is politically unstable for those members to join in. This request simply opens another option.

On behalf of our entire MEDA membership, I strongly encourage you to support this bill as we continue to work together to accelerate Montana's economic development.

Sincerely,

Rick Edwards, President

Cc: MEDA Board of Directors

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